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PRESS RELEASE

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NATURE OF CALL: GUN LOCKS TO SAVE YOUNG LIVES

**SHERIFF EDWARD N. BONNER and
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DIRECTOR RAY MERZ
RELEASE THE FOLLOWING:**

The Placer County Health and Human Services Department (HHS) is teaming up with the Placer County Sheriff's Office to help protect young children from accidental gunshot injuries and deaths.

Under an innovative program sponsored by the county and funded by the California Kids Plate Program, families can obtain free trigger locks to improve safety in homes where firearms are present. Another goal is to raise parents' awareness of the grave danger posed by unlocked, unsecured guns, and the need to teach children to be safe.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, firearm-related deaths to children under 16 is 12 times greater in the U.S. than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. Rural households are twice as likely to have unlocked, loaded guns than urban families, and children are more likely to become victims of gun accidents and suicides. Half of all children who get injured by guns are at home, while another 40 percent are in the homes of friends or neighbors.

"Even if you don't own a gun, there's a good chance that your child may sometime visit a home where firearms are present," said HHS Director Ray Merz.

"Teaching your child how to be safe is essential.

"If your child sees a gun, he or she should learn to "Stop. Don't touch. Leave the area. Tell an adult."

The Placer County Sheriff's Office will be passing out free trigger locks at the Auburn main office in DeWitt Center, and in substations in Colfax, Foresthill and Kings Beach.

"We are happy to team with the health professionals from HHS in promoting this program to save lives," said Sheriff Ed Bonner. "If you don't have a trigger lock, take us up on this opportunity."

The Kids' Plate Program, which sponsors this local outreach effort, is a partnership of several public and private agencies. Vehicle license plates which target children's safety issues are sold through Kids' Plate to pay for childhood injury prevention programs such as this one. Kids Plates are available through the DMV. Call 1-800-HEY-KIDS to learn more.

For more information contact the Sheriff's Office at 530-889-7857, or Health and Human Services at 530-889-7141 or 1-800-829-7199. Additional information about gun safety and Kids' Plates will also be available on the County web site, www.placer.ca.gov beginning next week.

RELEASED BY CAPTAIN RICK ARMSTRONG 530-889-7816

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